

Appendix table 8-24.

Public assessment of scientific research, by selected characteristics: 1979–99 (selected years)

Characteristic	1979	1981	1985	1988	1990	1992	1995	1997	1999
Percent									
All adults									
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	46	42	44	57	47	42	43	47	47
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	24	28	24	25	25	31	29	28	27
Benefits equal harmful results	19	13	13	5	15	11	16	13	11
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	7	12	13	9	10	12	10	8	10
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	4	5	6	4	3	4	3	4	5
Male									
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	51	48	48	59	54	45	47	52	50
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	23	27	23	25	24	30	28	27	27
Benefits equal harmful results	16	11	10	5	9	9	13	10	9
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	7	10	13	7	9	11	9	7	10
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	3	5	6	4	4	5	4	4	4
Female									
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	42	37	40	55	40	40	39	42	45
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	25	28	26	25	26	31	30	29	28
Benefits equal harmful results	23	16	14	6	20	13	19	15	12
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	6	14	14	10	11	12	10	10	10
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	4	5	6	4	3	4	3	4	5
Less than high school graduate									
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	26	26	20	37	24	24	18	30	25
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	25	23	21	30	25	33	30	28	25
Benefits equal harmful results	32	25	26	9	30	17	34	21	18
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	12	18	20	17	17	20	14	18	22
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	5	9	13	7	4	7	3	3	10
High school graduate									
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	50	43	47	59	49	41	44	46	47
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	26	31	26	25	27	32	30	30	31
Benefits equal harmful results	16	10	10	5	11	10	13	13	10
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	5	12	13	7	10	12	10	6	8
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	3	4	4	4	3	5	3	5	4
Baccalaureate and higher									
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	69	64	67	80	72	66	67	67	71
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	18	22	23	16	18	22	23	23	19
Benefits equal harmful results	8	7	2	1	6	8	6	6	5
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	2	4	6	2	2	3	3	3	4
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	3	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	1
Attentive public to science and technology^a									
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	67	63	59	62	61	48	64	64	61
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	16	20	17	23	19	27	21	19	21
Benefits equal harmful results	8	5	7	6	10	12	8	6	5
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	4	8	13	6	6	9	3	8	11
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	2
Sample size									
All adults	1,635	1,536	2,005	975	2,033	997	2,006	2,000	1,882
Male	773	724	950	475	964	464	953	930	900
Female	862	812	1,054	500	1,070	533	1,053	1,070	982
Less than high school graduate	465	385	507	259	495	215	418	420	403
High school graduate	932	886	1,147	546	1,202	579	1,196	1,188	1,111
Baccalaureate and higher	238	264	349	170	336	203	392	392	368
Attentive public to science and technology ^a ..	154	381	235	116	229	94	195	288	216

NOTES: Responses are for the following statements: "People have frequently noted that scientific research has produced both beneficial and harmful consequences. Would you say that, on balance, the benefits of scientific research have outweighed the harmful results, or have the harmful results of scientific research been greater than its benefits? Would you say that the balance has been strongly in favor of beneficial results or only slightly? Would you say that the balance has been strongly in favor of harmful results or only slightly?" Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

^aTo be classified as attentive to a given policy area, an individual must indicate that he or she is "very interested" in that issue area, report that he or she is "very well informed" about it, and be a regular reader of a daily newspaper or relevant national magazine. Citizens who report that they are "very interested" in an issue area, but who do not think that they are "very well informed" about it, are classified as the "interested public." All other individuals are classified as members of the "residual public" for that issue area. The attentive public for science and technology combines the attentive public for new scientific discoveries and the attentive public for new inventions and technologies. Any individual who is not attentive to either of those issues but who is a member of the interested public for at least one of those issues is classified as a member of the interested public for science and technology. All other individuals are classified as members of the residual public for science and technology.

SOURCES: National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resource Studies (NSF/SRS), *NSF Survey of Public Attitudes Toward and Understanding of Science and Technology, 1999* (and earlier years). For a complete set of data from the survey, see J.D. Miller and L. Kimmel, *Public Attitudes Toward Science and Technology, 1979–1999*, Integrated Codebook (Chicago: International Center for the Advancement of Scientific Literacy, Chicago Academy of Sciences, 1999); and unpublished tabulations.

See figure 8-10 in Volume 1.